United Nations A/C.2/56/SR.16

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
11 December 2001
English
Original: French

Second Committee

Summary record of the 16th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 26 October 2001, at noon

Chairman: Mr. Barnwell (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Guyana)

Contents

Agenda item 99: Operational activities for development (*continued*)

(a) Triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (*continued*)

(b) Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

01-60436 (E)

The meeting was called to order at noon.

Agenda item 99: Operational activities for development (*continued*)

(a) Triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (*continued*) (A/56/174, A/56/70-E/2001/58, A/56/70/Add.1-E/2001/58/Add.1, A/56/70/Add.2-E/2001/58/Add.2, A/56/320 and Add.1)

(b) Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries (*continued*) (A/56/39, A/56/134 and Add.1, A/56/465)

1. **Mr. Rao** (Director, Strategic Planning and Coordination Division, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that, while helping to build national capacity, UNFPA remained committed to the programme countries' leadership and coordination role. All partners of the United Nations Development Group continued to strengthen coordination. In the implementation of the triennial policy review, it was necessary to ensure that greater coordination led to better results and more effective programmes, with simpler and more harmonized processes that reduced transaction costs to all; such coordination should reduce workloads relating to programming, for programme countries as well as for United Nations country teams, and deliver greater benefits.

2. While much progress had been made in respect of harmonization of programming cycles, especially in the United Nations Development Group, there was still a need for more streamlining and simplification of many coordination and programming processes. UNFPA unequivocally supported the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework as the analytical and planning instruments of the United Nations system at the country level and it was committed to rooting that framework in the objectives of national strategies and policy planning, including poverty reduction policies and strategies.

3. A United Nations Development Group working group had been set up under UNFPA leadership, to develop a common programme approval process, on the understanding that any programme development process would be country-led and country-driven. Subsequent to the adoption of decision 2001/1 by the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, a small inter-agency working group comprising UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) was working on a common format for the country programme outline. UNFPA and other United Nations Development Group partners were also working to harmonize financial and administrative rules and procedures.

4. UNFPA was also strongly committed to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration goals and to their follow-up at the country level, fully mindful that implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development would contribute significantly thereto.

5. Due to the increased harmonization and simplification of procedures, the reports of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP to their respective Executive Boards had a common format and were very similar in content; the four agencies were therefore suggesting that reporting on the implementation of the triennial policy review and on United Nations reforms to the legislative bodies should be streamlined; they looked forward to the Committee's advice on that.

6. Those issues could not be discussed without a clear recognition of the need for an adequate level of resources. Mobilization of resources was a shared responsibility and although donors had in many cases increased their contributions, many factors had led to a zero growth or even a decrease. While members of the United Nations Development Group were pursuing results-based approaches and multi-year funding frameworks and were improving the management of their respective organizations, the issue of resources remained unresolved; it deserved priority consideration. The United Nations system looked forward in that regard to the outcome of the financing for development process.

7. **Mr. Al-Haddad** (Yemen) stressed that the triennial policy review of operational activities for development was an opportunity for tackling the important issue of the future of development cooperation in the light of the goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration.

8. His delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the item (A/56/320) and hoped that their implementation would lead to enhanced effectiveness and results for

the developing countries. Strengthening the operational role of the Untied Nations development system should help the developing countries deal with the economic and social repercussions of globalization and help them integrate themselves into the world economy so as to accelerate growth and reduce poverty. Recommendation 2 concerning information and communication technology was particularly important; the United Nations system must support countries in their efforts to build the capacities and infrastructure necessary to master those technologies and put them to the service of their own development. To that end, it would be necessary to reassess the resources of United Nations agencies and provide them with the technical skills and resources to respond to requests for assistance from recipient countries which were in urgent need of technology, including communication technology.

9. As for economic cooperation among developing countries, his delegation had taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the state of South-South cooperation (A/56/465) in the areas of trade, investment and monetary and financial arrangements. It was clear from the report that cooperation among these countries had increased in recent years; that might help foster a climate conducive to their integration into the global economy.

10. When considering the issue of technical cooperation among developing countries, the Committee should not overlook the importance of the outcome of the South-Summit, which had been held in Havana, and of its Programme of Action and the Caracas Programme; these were considered the bases for such cooperation. The Tehran consensus, which called for increased support from the operational activities of the international community for South-South cooperation, also was a useful contribution to the intensification of cooperation in all its forms and deserved the support of the United Nations system and of the international financial institutions. It was also necessary to implement the principles set forth in the Millennium Declaration; the international community, including the United Nations system, must re-examine its policies and practices in respect of development cooperation. It was also essential to mobilize the necessary resources to meet the economic cooperation needs of the developing countries and to strengthen their capacity so as to enable them to become genuine international partners in the economic and technical area.

11. **Mr. Abreha** (Ethiopia) said that the assistance provided to his country by the United Nations system of operational activities contributed to the fight against poverty and to the achievement of sustainable development. United Nations development cooperation should continue to operate on the basis of the principles of universality, neutrality and country specificity. The development goals set in the 1990s and in the Millennium Declaration constituted the frame of reference for the triennial review of operational activities. His delegation strongly believed that the main focus of those activities should be on poverty eradication. While implementation of the various development goals was the primary responsibility of Member States there was a need to forge partnerships to tackle the pressing global problems. While taking note with satisfaction of the positive impact that the reforms had had on United Nations operational activities, he agreed with the Secretary-General that availability of adequate resources for operational activities was an essential condition for sustaining the momentum of the reforms and continuing the operational activities. The decline or stagnation in core resources of the United Nations funds and programmes was a matter of great concern. While the adoption of the multi-year funding framework had, at least, slowed the decline in UNDP resources, concerted action was needed in order to attain the goals set by the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board.

12. The strategic frameworks of the common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Framework must be carefully designed so as not to jeopardize ownership by programme countries of their development priorities. Indeed they should be based on the priorities of those countries. The uneven involvement of Governments in the framework, which the Secretary-General had noted in his report (A/56/320), was therefore a matter of concern; at the same time, the framework was a new process and would have to be refined in the light of the lessons drawn from the pilot projects.

13. One issue demanded particular attention, namely the simplification of the rules, procedures and modalities pertaining to operational activities of the United Nations system specific to each organization in order to enhance the effectiveness of the UNDAF process. Some countries, including his own, had

developed an elaborate national execution modality; any recommendation designed to simplify the rules and procedures governing operational activities would have to take that into account.

14. **Ms. Oh** (Republic of Korea) said that the United Nations system, as it was rightly pointed out in the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/56/320), had an important role to play in helping to ensure a more equitable distribution of the benefits of globalization and new technologies, for instance by reducing income and digital disparities. In that regard, she welcomed the significant achievements within the United Nations development system during the past three years, including the resident coordinator system, the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as well as the recent close collaboration between United Nations development agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.

15. However, further efforts were required in some areas, including the simplification and harmonization of programme procedures. The most tangible achievements could be realized in United Nations reform by reducing transaction costs and thus enhancing the efficiency of development activities. She noted with satisfaction the programme cycle harmonization undertaken by UNDP and UNFPA and hoped the measure would be extended to other agencies.

16. She drew attention to the downward trend of core funding for United Nations development activities. While it was true that non-core funding played an important role, in order to maintain the multilateral nature of United Nations development activities, core funding should be the main source for those activities.

17. Technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) and South-South cooperation had been attracting increasing attention as a new strategy for development. The Special Unit for TCDC was a major focal point for all TCDC programmes and should expand its activities to further areas.

18. **Ms. Loemban Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) expressed concern about the decline in core resources allocated to development activities while non-core resources were rising and said that, as a result, the United Nations system was unable to plan development assistance in a consistent manner.

19. Her delegation was especially concerned by the evaluation of the programme management tools applied by the United Nations system in the past three years, namely CCA and UNDAF. Nevertheless, she welcomed the improved coherence and synergy of the United Nations system, for the sparse funds for development must not be spent on coordination of United Nations activities. As other delegations had said, only national priorities should be taken into account in the UNDAF formulation process.

20. Given the decrease in official development assistance and reduced opportunities in trade for developing countries as a result of globalization, developing countries needed to focus more on cooperation with each other, particularly at the regional level. With that in mind, her country had strengthened its ties with the countries of the Caribbean Community. She expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Special Unit for TCDC to improve South-South cooperation and called for an expansion of its activities. She welcomed the commitment shown by Japan to promote South-South cooperation and encouraged other countries to follow its example.

21. **Mr. Dogani** (United Republic of Tanzania), emphasizing the importance of operational activities for development, said that, with adequate, predictable and regular funding, the funds and programmes of the United Nations could go a long way in supporting developing countries in the management of their own development process. However, the funds and programmes were not generating adequate core resources to meet the established targets and the new requirements arising from the decisions of the major United Nations conferences and summits. On the other hand, non-core resources were increasing, and additional resources were being channelled to developing countries through non-governmental organizations. While recognizing the important role of such resources to the development of developing countries, he expressed concern at the prominence they had begun to acquire over multilateral operations. With that in mind, there should be a substantial increase in the core resources of operational activities for development, which should be available on a predictable and continuous basis. It was regrettable that MYFF had failed to mobilize the necessary resources.

22. The report of the Secretary-General contained many useful proposals designed to strengthen the operational activities of the United Nations system, but

it was important to ensure that the fundamental characteristics of those activities, namely their universal, voluntary and grant-based nature, as well as their ability to respond to the needs of developing countries in a flexible and timely manner, were maintained. Furthermore, operational activities must be carried out for the benefit of developing countries, upon their request and in accordance with their own national policies and priorities.

23. National plans and priorities constituted the only viable frame of reference for the national programming of operational activities for development. Recipient Governments had the primary responsibility for coordinating all types of external assistance and integrating them effectively into their development process.

24. While he recognized the important role played by CCA and UNDAF in enhancing coherence in operational activities, those mechanisms should also be used to intensify capacity-building initiatives so as to enable developing countries to coordinate their external assistance effectively and at less cost. They were also likely to enhance national ownership and therefore contribute enormously to poverty reduction.

25. As donor assistance was declining, technical and economic cooperation among developing countries could help those countries to meet the challenges they faced. However, it should not be regarded as a substitute for traditional development cooperation. In that regard, the support of the developed countries through triangular cooperation was critical, as was the assistance of the United Nations. The Special Unit for TCDC played an important role in that area, despite its limited capacity, and it needed to be provided with adequate resources to discharge its mandate fully.

26. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had completed consideration of agenda item 99.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.